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CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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GUY P. JONES  
Editor

## DANGERS IN HOME-CANNED FOOD PRODUCTS

Housewives are instructed by the California State Department of Public Health to boil all home-canned fruits, vegetables, animal or fish products for at least 15 minutes before serving.

If any such home-canned product has a disagreeable odor or shows any signs of spoilage, it should be discarded at once.

*Never, under any circumstances, should any suspected home-canned product be tasted, even in the smallest quantity, without first boiling for at least 15 minutes. Many housewives who have merely tasted home-canned products which had a disagreeable odor have met with sudden, fatal death as a result of this seemingly unimportant procedure.*

Home-canned products that have a disagreeable odor or show any signs of spoilage should never be fed to domestic animals, particularly to chickens or any other poultry. Such products may cause "limberneck," a disease highly fatal in poultry.

By observing these simple precautions many unnecessary cases of severe illness, with fatal results, may be prevented. The observance of these precautions is particularly important at the present time because of war conditions and the necessity of conserving food products.

*If all housewives would remember never to serve any home-canned vegetable, fruit, fish or meat product without boiling for at least 15 minutes, there would be little or no opportunity for cases of botulism to occur through eating home-canned products.*

Housewives who own steam pressure-cookers and who know how to use them for home-canning may safely apply this method. Since aluminum pressure-cookers are not now readily available the average

housewife is unable to use this method for home-canning. Any method other than the pressure-cooker method, at the present time, requires that home-canned products be boiled for at least 15 minutes in open containers before serving.

Spoilage in canned products may be due to molds, yeast, and bacteria. In this discussion the terrific damage that may be done by bacteria is stressed. The chief cause of food poisoning from home-canned products is botulism which develops from the *bacillus botulinus*, a spore, which, unlike pathogenic organisms such as those that cause diphtheria, typhoid and other diseases, develops only in the absence of air. Most of the pathogenic organisms require light, air, warmth and moisture in order to reproduce. The anaerobic spore bearing organisms, however, develop only in the absence of air and can be destroyed only by extremely high temperatures. While the *bacillus botulinus* is found commonly and is widely distributed in the soil, it does not produce damaging effects until it finds ideal conditions for reproduction and growth in the airless interior of a closed container. In the reproduction process powerful toxins or poisons are developed. It is these poisons that cause the damage and only boiling for 15 minutes will destroy them. A mere taste of these poisons may cause death.

Unless a food product, in the process of canning, can be heated to a temperature above boiling for sufficient periods of time and with sure penetration to the very center of the contents of the can, it is unsafe to eat such product. The average housewife does not have equipment for insuring sufficiently high temperatures that are sure to penetrate, for required periods of time, to the very center of the



cans, nor does she have the required information relative to the varying periods of time to which products must be cooked, because of the variations in density and heat conduction in the various food products.

The large commercial canneries are equipped with the machinery and the technical knowledge that makes commercial canning of food products 100 per cent safe. No cases of botulism have occurred in products packed in California canneries since the State regulations for the commercial canning of vegetable, fish and meat products were adopted in 1925.

Of all home-canned food products, string beans in California have caused more cases of botulism and more deaths from this disease than any other single vegetable product. This is due, no doubt, to the fact that bountiful crops of string beans are available in many home gardens. In order to conserve the excess quantity of this vegetable, it is generally canned quickly and in large quantities. Because of its close contact with the soil, the causative organisms of botulism are always present. The string bean is also a very popular vegetable everywhere. That, in itself, may have considerable to do with the high incidence of botulism among consumers of home-canned string beans.

The California State Department of Public Health has reports of 68 cases of botulism with 48 deaths due to the consumption of home-canned string beans, 15 cases and seven deaths from home-canned beets, eight cases and five deaths due to the use of home-canned corn as well as cases and deaths due to home-canned asparagus, tomatoes, peppers, beets, mushrooms, peas and other vegetable products.

Home-canned animal products have also caused deaths from botulism. The numbers of such cases and deaths are not as great as those that have occurred through the use of vegetable products for the reason that relatively few housewives do any home canning of animal products. Nevertheless, the State Health Department has reports of 18 such cases with 10 deaths.

Sea foods, unless packed under high temperatures for a sufficient length of time, may also cause botulism. Records of the State Health Department show that 23 cases with 10 deaths have occurred among individuals who consumed home-canned sea foods, particularly tuna and salmon.

Improperly packed fruits may also cause botulism. The records of the State Health Department show that 45 cases and 34 deaths from this cause have been due to the consumption of home-canned pears, apricots, figs, persimmons and olives. Pears and apricots have caused most such cases and deaths, 33 such cases

and 26 deaths having been traced to these two home-canned fruits.

Altogether there have been 245 cases and 155 deaths due to the eating of home-canned products. Most such cases and deaths have been due to the consumption of home-canned vegetable products.

	Cases	Deaths
Vegetable Products -----	154	97
Animal Products -----	18	10
Sea Foods -----	23	10
Fruit Products -----	45	34
Home Brew -----	5	4
Total -----	245	155

### Summary

Housewives are cautioned always to:

1. Boil all home-canned vegetable, fruit, fish and animal products for at least 15 minutes after removal from the container before serving.
2. Never, under any circumstances, taste home-canned food. All jars or cans of food that have a disagreeable odor or show any signs of spoilage should be destroyed without tasting.
3. All home-canned food products, suspected of spoilage, should not be fed to poultry or animals.
4. All cases of illness that may follow the consumption of home-canned products should be reported at once to the local health officer.

### CONFERENCE OF SOCIAL WORK

The thirty-fourth annual meeting of the California Conference of Social Work will be held in San Francisco April 19 to 23, 1942. The Civic Auditorium will serve as headquarters of the conference. General sessions and kindred group meetings will be held in the auditorium and in adjacent buildings.

Dr. Martha Eliot, Associate Chief of the Children's Bureau, U. S. Department of Labor, will be one of the guest speakers. She visited in Great Britain last year as a member of the United States Mission on Civil Defense. Her contribution to the program will deal with the end results to health and welfare in a city that has been bombed.

Among other items on the program that will be of interest to health workers are papers on nutrition, venereal diseases, food hazards, tuberculosis, sanitary engineering, heart disease, mental hygiene and medical care.

Among the kindred groups that will meet at the same time are the American Association of Medical Social Workers, the American Red Cross and many others.



**INDUSTRIAL SURGEONS TO MEET**

The Western Association of Industrial Physicians and Surgeons will meet at Del Monte on Sunday, May 3d, at the same time that the meeting of the California Medical Association is held. Dr. R. T. Legge, Professor of Hygiene, University of California at Berkeley, is president, and Dr. Christopher Legge of Crockett, is secretary.

The following program has been prepared:

**PROGRAM****WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF INDUSTRIAL PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS**

Sunday, May 3, 1942

Del Monte, California

10.00 a.m.

Diagnosis of the Source of Hematuria Following Severe Accidents Dr. J. J. Crane, Los Angeles, California

Geographic Distribution of the Industrial Medical Problems in California Dr. Harold T. Castberg, United States Public Health Service, Berkeley, California

Industrial Nursing Dr. W. P. Shepard Metropolitan Life Ins. Co., San Francisco, California

President's Address Dr. R. T. Legge

12.30 p.m.—Buffet Luncheon

2.00 p.m.

Industrial Medicine in the Aviation Plant Dr. Fenn E. Poole Lockheed Aircraft Corp., Glendale, California

The Division of Industrial Hygiene of the Los Angeles County Health Dept. Mr. Frank Stead, Sanitary Engr., Chief, Div. Industrial Hygiene, Los Angeles, California

Workmen's Compensation Mr. Warren Pillsbury Deputy Commissioner, U. S. Employees' Compensation Commission, San Francisco, California

Industrial Medicine's Responsibility During and After the War Dr. R. T. Johnstone, Los Angeles, California

The Work of the Council of Industrial Health of the A. M. A. Dr. Carl Peterson, Sec'y. Council on Industrial Health, A. M. A., Chicago, Ill.

4.30 p.m.

Business Meeting

6.30 p.m.

Officers' Reception

**DR. FARNSWORTH IN ALAMEDA**

Dr. Stanford F. Farnsworth, formerly Coordinating Officer with the California State Department of Public Health and more recently Medical Director in San Francisco for the Farm Security Administration, has been appointed Health Officer of Alameda County to succeed Dr. I. O. Church who is now Health Officer of Branch County, Michigan. Dr. Farnsworth has had wide experience in public health and Alameda County is fortunate to secure his services.

**DEATH COMES TO JOHN RUSSELL**

Dr. John P. Russell, who organized the Industrial Hygiene Services of the California State Department of Public Health in 1937 and had always served as its chief, died suddenly at his home in Berkeley March 17th. During the short time that he had served as a member of the staff of the department, he had achieved an enviable reputation in the State's public health service.

The expansion of war industries enabled Dr. Russell to make an outstanding contribution to National defense and preparations for war. There had only recently been published two outstanding reports from his pen, "Occupational Health Hazards in Aircraft Production," published in the November, 1941, issue of War Medicine and reprinted under the copyright of the American Medical Association, and "Skin Hazards Found in Airplane Manufacturing Plants," with Dr. Louis Schwartz, Medical Director, U. S. Public Health Service, as co-author.

In addition to his contributions to the California State Department of Public Health, he assisted materially in establishing industrial hygiene services within both the Los Angeles City and Los Angeles County Health Departments.

He was a graduate in medicine from the George Washington University in Washington, D. C. and a graduate in public health from the University of California. From 1924 to 1932 he was a flight surgeon in the U. S. Army, having retired as a Captain, due to ill health.

The staff of the California State Department of Public Health, together with his associates in industrial hygiene throughout the State regret Dr. Russell's untimely demise and recognize that his place in the State's public health organization can not adequately be filled.

**ANNUAL MEETING OF TUBERCULOSIS ASSOCIATIONS**

The annual meeting of the California Tuberculosis Association and the California Trudeau Society will be held at the Ambassador Hotel, Los Angeles, April 9, 10 and 11.

Dr. J. Burns Amberson, Jr., of New York and Dr. Henry C. Sweany of Chicago are expected to speak before the clinical sections.

Daniel C. McCarthy, public relations chief of the National Tuberculosis Association will be a guest, and help with special sessions on administration of tuberculosis association work.

The annual dinner and X-ray symposium for physicians is one of the popular features, as is also



the clinical symposium to be held at Olive View Sanatorium.

Several hundred persons, delegates from the tuberculosis associations throughout the State and others interested in public health work are expected to attend the sessions.

### MEASLES REACHES NEW HIGH

No less than 4,800 cases of measles were reported recently, during a single week, to the California State Department of Public Health. Never before have so many cases been reported in this State during a similar period of time. Apparently, 1942 will break all records for high prevalence of measles in California.

### CHANGE AMONG HEALTH OFFICERS

Mr. Richard Maggi has been appointed City Health Officer of Jackson in Amador County to succeed Mr. Earl J. Garberini.

### MORBIDITY\*

Complete Reports for Certain Diseases Recorded for Week Ending March 7, 1942

#### Chickenpox

1342 cases from the following counties: Alameda 162, Amador 4, Butte 10, Contra Costa 30, Del Norte 2, Fresno 52, Kern 22, Lassen 1, Los Angeles 582, Madera 7, Marin 1, Merced 2, Monterey 5, Orange 17, Placer 3, Riverside 16, Sacramento 20, San Bernardino 32, San Diego 77, San Francisco 56, San Joaquin 7, San Luis Obispo 8, San Mateo 7, Santa Barbara 70, Santa Clara 51, Santa Cruz 20, Shasta 3, Siskiyou 5, Solano 3, Sonoma 12, Stanislaus 3, Sutter 1, Tehama 8, Tulare 30, Tuolumne 2, Ventura 1, Yolo 8, Yuba 1, California 1.\*\*

#### German Measles

630 cases from the following counties: Alameda 83, Butte 1, Contra Costa 5, Fresno 3, Humboldt 3, Kern 13, Los Angeles 93, Marin 1, Merced 14, Monterey 26, Nevada 2, Orange 4, Placer 1, Riverside 1, Sacramento 2, San Bernardino 3, San Diego 84, San Francisco 98, San Joaquin 10, San Luis Obispo 25, San Mateo 8, Santa Barbara 4, Santa Clara 30, Santa Cruz 2, Solano 11, Sonoma 12, Stanislaus 14, Sutter 1, Tulare 63, Yolo 10, Yuba 2.

#### Measles

4815 cases from the following counties: Alameda 235, Amador 14, Butte 106, Colusa 44, Contra Costa 30, Del Norte 4, Eldorado 6, Fresno 515, Humboldt 6, Kern 28, Kings 28, Lake 1, Los Angeles 1245, Madera 256, Marin 3, Mendocino 12, Merced 44, Monterey 26, Napa 55, Nevada 1, Orange 183, Placer 1, Riverside 27, Sacramento 156, San Bernardino 329, San Diego 232, San Francisco 64, San Joaquin 135, San Luis Obispo 30, San Mateo 6, Santa Barbara 282, Santa Clara 4, Santa Cruz 9, Siskiyou 1, Solano 82, Sonoma 47, Stanislaus 105, Sutter 39, Tehama 2, Tulare 246, Ventura 74, Yolo 57, Yuba 45.

#### Mumps

2070 cases from the following counties: Alameda 223, Butte 10, Colusa 26, Contra Costa 64, Del Norte 21, Eldorado 3, Fresno 57, Humboldt 1, Kern 57, Kings 3, Lassen 15, Los Angeles 455, Madera 47, Marin 12, Merced 15, Monterey 34, Napa 2, Orange 115, Plumas 5, Riverside 20, Sacramento 79, San Bernardino 53, San Diego 211, San Francisco 131, San Joaquin 38, San Luis Obispo 40, San Mateo 39, Santa Barbara 39, Santa Clara 104, Santa Cruz 37, Shasta 11, Siskiyou 2, Solano 5, Sonoma 56, Stanislaus 7, Sutter 5, Tehama 3, Tulare 12, Ventura 4, Yolo 9.

\* Data regarding the other reportable diseases not listed herein, may be obtained upon request.

\*\* Cases charged to "California" represent patients ill before entering the State or those who contracted their illness traveling about the State throughout the incubation period of the disease. These cases are not chargeable to any one locality.

#### Scarlet Fever

141 cases from the following counties: Alameda 4, Butte 2, Contra Costa 3, Kern 3, Lake 2, Los Angeles 63, Merced 1, Monterey 3, Orange 3, Riverside 5, Sacramento 3, San Bernardino 3, San Diego 12, San Francisco 15, San Joaquin 2, San Luis Obispo 5, San Mateo 1, Santa Barbara 2, Santa Clara 5, Tulare 2, Ventura 2.

#### Whooping Cough

381 cases from the following counties: Alameda 31, Butte 7, Contra Costa 2, Fresno 38, Humboldt 1, Kern 6, Kings 8, Lassen 7, Los Angeles 77, Madera 9, Marin 1, Merced 4, Monterey 1, Orange 12, Plumas 9, Riverside 1, Sacramento 22, San Diego 7, San Francisco 10, San Joaquin 29, San Luis Obispo 4, San Mateo 1, Santa Barbara 20, Santa Clara 16, Santa Cruz 3, Sonoma 10, Stanislaus 3, Sutter 30, Tulare 4, Ventura 4, Yolo 3, Yuba 1.

#### Coccidioid Granuloma

One case from San Joaquin County.

#### Diarrhea of Newborn (Epidemic)

7 cases from Santa Clara County.

#### Diphtheria

22 cases from the following counties: Butte 1, Los Angeles 9, Merced 1, Riverside 4, San Francisco 3, San Joaquin 2, San Luis Obispo 2.

#### Dysentery (Bacillary)

One case from Los Angeles County.

#### Encephalitis (Epidemic)

One case from Los Angeles County.

#### Epilepsy

48 cases from the following counties: Fresno 1, Los Angeles 36, San Bernardino 3, San Francisco 4, Sonoma 4.

#### Food Poisoning

12 cases from the following counties: Los Angeles 2, Solano 10.

#### Influenza

189 cases reported in the State.

#### Jaundice (Epidemic)

2 cases from the following counties: Butte 1, San Francisco 1.

#### Malaria

One case from Fresno County.

#### Meningitis (Epidemic)

6 cases from the following counties: Sacramento 1, San Diego 1, San Francisco 1, San Joaquin 1, San Luis Obispo 1, Santa Cruz 1.

#### Paratyphoid Fever

2 cases from the following counties: Los Angeles 1, Sacramento 1.

#### Poliomyelitis

2 cases from the following counties: Kern 1, Los Angeles 1.

#### Rabies (Animal)

11 cases from the following counties: Fresno 5, Los Angeles 6.

#### Rheumatic Fever

3 cases from the following counties: Kern 1, Los Angeles 1, Tulare 1.

#### Septic Sore Throat

One case from Tulare County.

#### Tetanus

One case from Contra Costa County.

#### Trichinosis

One case from Shasta County.

#### Typhoid Fever

6 cases from the following counties: Los Angeles 2, Riverside 1, San Diego 2, Sonoma 1.

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